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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides an overview of the growing demands for adult education as well as other social services in helping migrant workers move out of poverty and succeed in cultures other than their own. Issues raised included questions about migrants' access to education and about building solidarity networks for ensuring basic human rights. A comparative view of migrant education practices in Asia and Europe and general issues relating to the problem of refugee education were also considered. The booklet concludes that it is possible to support the right of migrants and refugees to education by providing comprehensive education and training opportunities that promote their political, economic, and social participation and enhance their competence and their cultural base. Initiatives for these efforts already exist. Recommendations are made to develop and implement programs to help host populations to understand the rights and conditions of migrants and refugees and to enroll nomadic populations in education programs. (KC)

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A series of 29 booklets documenting workshops held at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education

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8b Migrant education

Migrant education

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This publication has been produced by the UNESCO Institute for Education within the context of the follow-up to the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), held in Hamburg in 1997.

Readers are reminded that the points of view, selection of facts, and the opinions expressed in the booklets are those that were raised by panellists, speakers and participants during the workshop sessions and therefore do not necessarily coincide with official positions of the UNESCO or of the UNESCO Institute for Education Hamburg. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the UNESCO Secretariat concerning the legal status of any country or territory, or its authorities, or concerning the delimitations of the frontiers of any country or territory.

Theme 8: Adult learning and groups with special needs

Booklets under this theme:

8a Adult learning and ageing populations

8b Migrant education

8c Adult learning for prisoners

8d Making education accessible and available to all persons with disabilities

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Foreword

In July 1997 the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education was held in Hamburg, organised by UNESCO and in particular the UNESCO Institute for Education, the agency's specialist centre on adult learning policy and research. Approximately 1500 delegates attended from all regions of the world, with representatives of 140 member states and some 400 NGOs. In addition to the work of the commissions and plenary which debated the official documents of the Conference The Hamburg Declaration and The Agenda for the Future, there were 33 workshops organised around the themes and sub-themes of the Conference.

As part of its CONFINTEA follow-up strategy, the UNESCO Institute for Education has produced this series of 29 booklets based on the presentations and discussions held during the Conference. The recordings of all the workshops were transcribed and synthesized over one year, edited, and then formatted and designed. A tremendous amount of work has gone into this process. Linda King, coordinator of the monitoring and information strategy for CONFINTEA, was responsible for overseeing the whole process. Madhu Singh, senior research specialist at UIE, undertook the mammoth task of writing almost all the booklets based on an analysis of the sessions. She was helped in the later stages by Gonzalo Retamal, Uta Papen and Linda King. Christopher McIntosh was technical editor, Matthew Partridge designed the layout and Janna Lowrey was both transcriber and translator.

The booklets are intended to draw out the central issues and concerns of each of the CONFINTEA workshops. They are the memory of an event that marked an important watershed in the field of adult learning. We hope that they will be of use both to those who were able to attend CONFINTEA V and those who were not. We look forward to your comments, feedback and continuing collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Education.

Paul Bélanger,
Director, UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg
and Secretary General of CONFINTEA

Migrant education

Introduction

Migration is not a new phenomenon. Women and men have been leaving their homes and lands in search of work elsewhere ever since wage labour was first introduced. Yet there are more migrants today than in any other period of human history. Millions of people now earn a living, seek paid employment or protection from persecution in countries where they reside as foreigners.

The workshop on migrant education at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), held in July 1997 in Hamburg, had the task of examining the importance of adult learning for economic and forced migrants. The workshop was chaired by Andrew Ma, CARITAS, Hong Kong. Speakers represented many organisations: Stella Dadzie, represented the Learning to Live in a Multi-cultural Society Adult Education and Training Network; Christiane Wilkening, from Senatsamt for Gleichstellung, Hamburg; Lin Ching Hsia represented the Informal Centre for Labour Education, Solidarity Front for Women; Rene Mark Nielsen and Carsten Levin, from Denmark; Pat Mix, Vicky Morales and Iska Koch represented Amnesty for Women.

The panel – representing governments and NGOs from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Hong Kong and Taiwan – discussed the main challenges confronting the developed and developing societies.

The right to education and training was central to the panel presentations. This included questions about migrants' access to education and about building solidarity networks for ensuring basic human rights. A comparative view of migrant education practices in Asia and Europe and general issues relating to the problem of refugee education were also considered.

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The situation of migrants and their right to education and training

One can distinguish between voluntary and involuntary migration. Such a distinction however remains ambiguous. Individuals who flee from perceived persecution are often at the same time seeking better economic and educational opportunities in other countries.

> The term 'migrant worker' refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.
> (International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Article 2, § 1)
>
> A refugee is a person who: As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such event, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.
> (1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Article 1, § 2)

There is no continent, no region of the world which does not have its contingent of voluntary and involuntary migrants.

It has been widely recognised that the alternative to global "recruitment" or migration of populations is to rely on formal and informal agreements between governments. But after the 1970s, on account of the present global economic crises, some governments have turned a blind eye to enforcement of conventions on migration, creating an environment open to insecurity and deportation.

The increasing proportion of those aged over 65 in developed countries combines with a fertility close to replacement levels to maintain a permanent demand for foreign workers from South and Eastern Europe – especially in the service and other labour intensive sectors.

Poverty and the inability to earn or produce enough to support oneself or a family are major reasons behind the movement of work-seekers. Not just migration from poor to rich countries: poverty also fuels movement from one developed country to another where work prospects seem better.

Migration has many historical justifications. New relationships and imperatives of economic growth have caused widespread migration and even encouraged it. Between the end of the 50s and the 70s, migration took place from less industrialised countries of the South to ex-colonial countries of Europe.

Some governments, such as the Philippines, encourage their citizens to go abroad to work; others have actively recruited foreign workers e.g. many West European and Southeast Asian countries including Japan, where bilateral agreements between governments cover migrant labour.

Migrants and refugees, whether under contract, setting off on their own initiative, or in fear of persecution, are formally protected by international conventions on matters related to education and training.

Accordingly, they are entitled to receive basic adult education in language and culture plus information on the legal, social and political structures of the country to which they are going. They are informed in advance of the working and living conditions they can expect to find. Also the right of access to education and training is provided for both migrants and refugees in these international conventions.

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The social and educational rights of migrant workers

1 Migrant workers shall enjoy equality of treatment with nationals of the State of employment in relation to:
(a) Access to educational institutions and services subject to the admission requirements and other regulations of the institutions and services concerned;
(b) Access to vocational training guidance and placement services;
(c) Access to vocational training and retraining facilities and institutions;
(d) Access to housing, including social housing schemes, and protection against exploitation in respect of rents;
(e) Access to social and health services, provided that the requirements for participation in the respective schemes are met;
(f) Access to co-operatives and self-managed enterprises, which shall not imply a change of their migration status and shall be subject to the rules and regulations of the bodies concerned;
(g) Access to and participation in cultural life;

2 States Parties shall promote conditions to ensure effective equality of treatment to enable migrant workers to enjoy the rights mentioned in paragraph 1 of the present article whenever the terms of their stay, as authorised by the State of employment, meet the appropriate requirements.

3 States of employment shall not prevent an employer of migrant workers from establishing housing or social or cultural facilities for them. Subject to article 70 of the present Convention, a State of employment may make the establishment of such facilities subject to the requirements generally applied in that State concerning their installation. Article 43

1 Members of the families of migrant workers shall, in the State of employment, enjoy equality of treatment with nationals of that State in relation to:
(a) Access to educational institutions and services, subject to the admission requirements and other regulations of the institutions and services concerned;
(b) Access to vocational guidance and training institutions and services, provided that requirements for participation are met;
(c) Access to social and health services, provided that requirements for participation in the respective schemes are met;
(d) Access to and participation in cultural life.

2 States of employment shall pursue a policy, where appropriate in collaboration with the States of origin, aimed at facilitating the integration of children of migrant workers in the local school system, particularly in respect of teaching them the local language.

3 States of employment shall endeavour to facilitate for the children of migrant workers the teaching of their mother tongue and culture and, in this regard, States of origin shall collaborate whenever appropriate.

4 States of employment may provide special schemes of education in the mother tongue of children of migrant workers, if necessary in collaboration with the States of origin. Article 45

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
General Assembly Resolution 45/158 December 1990

The educational rights of refugees

The right of refugees to public education is similarly spelled out in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status refugees, Article 22: Public education:
"The contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education. Regarding other types of education, the contracting States are requested to accord to refugees treatment as favorable as possible, and, in any event, not less favorable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education, and, in particular, as regard access to studies, the recognition of foreign schools certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarship".

UNHCR Guidelines for educational assistance for refugees, Geneva 1995.

These rights of migrants and refugees to education and adult learning play a vital role in transferring basic skills for integration and survival.

These conventions are far from being fully applied. Migrants and refugees often become a source of conflict and negative reaction within national populations and host governments.

"These public concerns are based on labour competition due to the scarcity of jobs, the growing social divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and a general decline in economic prosperity. They have all contributed to an official view that the presence of migrants and refugees in Europe is a problem. Economic and social hardship have encouraged sections of the indigenous European population, themselves the product of centuries of ethnic melting, to declare that 'the boat is full'. Such political slogans have played on popular fears that indigenous Europeans are losing their national identities. They also encourage the extreme scapegoat mentality that blames 'outsiders' for the internal socio-economic problems faced by the host society."

A speaker at the CONFINTEA workshop

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Global migration and the emergence of multicultural societies

Over the past four decades, there has been increasing immigration into Western Europe of persons from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This has contributed to a change in the dominant perception of European cultural homogeneity.

In this context multi-culturalism has increasingly featured in programmes of adult education and training in the countries of the European Union (EU).

In sharp contrast to the past, conservative populist movements in EU countries are now seeking to curtail or reduce the number of "aliens" and foreigners although the non-European population in the fifteen member states represents only approximately 2.1% of the total population.

The current socio-economic profile of migrant and ethnic minority communities shows that they are faced with a set of problems:

- long periods and disproportionately high levels of unemployment;
- a high percentage working in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs;
- high incidence of poverty and homelessness, including generally poor housing and living conditions;
- growing incidence of family breakdown with more women becoming sole parents and more men living alone;
- growing criminality, exacerbated by structural racism and unequal access to criminal justice and protection;
- spatial and social segregation;
- high incidence of physical and mental illness.

A global understanding and approach to migration must recognise the interplay between migration and social, economic and political forces. At the same time, a comprehensive policy framework needs to address the following issues:

- countries' migration policies must be reviewed, strengthened or established so as to ensure a better match between external pressures and domestic needs;
- within sending, receiving and transit countries, strong governmental migration structures must exist which can both manage national migration programmes and participate in co-operative international solutions;
- international trade, investment and development aid should target and reach migration-producing countries or areas within such countries;
- programmes must be designed to disseminate credible information to potential migrants about migration opportunities and the pitfalls of irregular migration;
- programmes must be expanded which facilitate the voluntary return of migrants, including those with skills to contribute to the developing process; and
- the right of individual migrants and refugees is to be respected.

The process of building access to adult learning in the above mentioned context is not a given. It means building up partnerships between NGOs and governments.

Conclusion

It is possible to support the right of migrants and refugees to education by providing comprehensive education and training opportunities that promote their political, economic and social participation and enhance their competence and their cultural base. Concrete initiatives already exist.

It is possible to develop and implement programmes for the host population, designed to promote understanding, especially among politicians, media experts, law enforcement agents, educators and social service agents, concerning the rights and conditions of migrants and refugees. Some examples have been given.

It is possible to ensure that the lifestyles and languages of adult gypsies and other nomadic groups be taken into account. They should be enrolled in local adult learning groups and then helped to continue in further training institutions. This has already been demonstrated. However such policy changes require a significant consensus among the diversified adult learning agencies and networks. This first step for change will be a priority in the follow-up of CONFINTEA.

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The CONFINTEA logo, designed by Michael Smitheram of Australia, represents the lines on the palm of a hand. These lines are universal and yet different for each subject. They celebrate cultural diversity and the joy of learning.

Theme 8

Adult education and groups with special needs

Booklets under this theme:

a Adult learning and ageing populations
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c Adult learning for prisoners
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